

Library future uncertain

By **Jim Eadie**

The future of the Wollaston and Limerick Union Public Library located in Coe Hill is up in the air after the Limerick municipal council decided to withdraw from its agreement with Wollaston, effective the end of this year.

In a letter to Wollaston Reeve Graham Blair, and his council, Limerick Reeve Sharon Carson said: "In the 21st century, access to information and library services have become much more diverse. This is due to information that can be accessed from the Internet and then downloaded via computers, e-books, kiosks and iPhones from their desired location, mainly their home."

"I can speak for council in saying we are pretty disappointed," said Blair. "People forget that a library these days is much more than just a place to borrow books. I think if Limerick withdraws, it is incumbent on Wollaston township to maintain it. I certainly would not want this to be the end of the library."

"The library board has already held an emergency meeting to brainstorm how do we go forward, and what do we need to do," said library board chair Elizabeth Flanagan. She noted that the library has a very active group, Friends of the library, as well which has organized and hosted children's music concerts, puppet shows, craft and reading activities, and community presentations about subjects such as beekeeping, health, astronomy and the local natural environment.

On its website, the library is described as "a valuable resource supporting literacy, employment, local business, health and daily life in the community; promoting information sharing and social interaction right here at home."

"Many people come to the library to learn how to navigate the Internet," said Flanagan. "I am really sad [Limerick] have decided not to be part of the library."

The library was created in 1972 as a union library, and at that time it also included the Township of Tudor and Cashel. In 1985, Tudor and Cashel withdrew and the library continued with the two remaining townships.

The departure of Limerick township will leave a significant hole in the library budget. The current agreement based roughly on population, has Limerick township paying one third of the municipal contribution, and Wollaston township paying two thirds. The 2016 contribution by Limerick is \$9,330.75.

Flanagan noted that the library is supported by Ministry of Culture grants that are also tied to population, and the loss of Limerick's population will reduce the grants received.

"Altogether the library would lose over \$11,000 that is a big shortfall," she said. "We already run a very lean budget."

Wollaston township clerk Jennifer Cohen confirmed that Reeve Blair, and library board member and Councillor Lynn Kruger will be attending as a delegation to the Sept. 12 regular meeting of Limerick township council.

"They hope to have a discussion with them to try and find some solutions," she said. "Possibly some of their concerns can be addressed."

Limerick township Reeve Sharon Carson noted that her council is open to discussions with Wollaston representatives.

"We decided if we were going to make a change in our finances, we were not going to leave it until the last minute to talk about it," she said. "But \$9000 is a lot of money, considering the size of our little township. I am an educator, and educators don't shut down libraries but we send out 835 tax bills some of them are only hunt camps and vacant land. Do the division. It is costing a little over \$100 per household for the library. We will meet our obligations this year, but after December 2016 we will not continue."

Carson also questioned whether Limerick residents were making use of the library.

?I wonder who is using the library, and how much they are using it,? she said.